

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 CU-02 BIB-01 /061 W
-----131431Z 048942 /45

R 131313Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3071
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SOFIA 1269

BELGRADE ALSO FOR USDEL, CSCE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SCUL, OEXC, PFOR, BU
SUBJECT: SOFIA INTERNATIONAL WRITERS' CONFERENCE

REF: A) SOFIA 0508 (NOTAL); B) SOFIA 0598 (NOTAL); C) SOFIA 1258
(NOTAL)

1. LAST FRIDAY, AFTER THE INTERNATIONAL WRITERS' CONFERENCE
HAD CLOSED, I HAD JOHN CHEEVER, WILLIAM SAROYAN AND GORE
VIDAL FOR LUNCH. THEY WERE UNANIMOUS IN (A) PRAISE FOR THE
BULGARIAN HOSTS WHOM THEY DESCRIBED AS GENTLE AND CHARMING
PEOPLE; (B) BELIEF THAT AS A GOOD-WILL GESTURE THE CONFERENCE
HAD LARGELY ACHIEVED ITS PURPOSES; (C) RECOGNITION THAT IT
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HAD BEEN CALLED WITH AN EYE TO BELGRADE AND FOR ESSENTIALLY
POLITICAL PROPAGANDA PURPOSES; AND (D) CONCLUSION THAT TO
THE EXTENT THAT THOSE PURPOSES WERE TO CONVINCE ANYONE
OF THE COMMUNIST POSITION ON PARTICULAR ISSUES, OR EVEN
TO ATTRACT ATTENTION IN THE WEST AND PARTICULARLY IN THE
US, THE CONFERENCE MUST BE JUDGED A FAILURE. (ONE
POSSIBLE EXCEPTION TO THIS CONCLUSION WAS GORE VIDAL WHO

THOUGHT THE IDEA OF HOLDING THE CONFERENCE HAD BEEN "SHEER GENIUS" BUT WAS UNABLE TO POINT TO ANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR ITS SPONSORS OTHER THAN THE SPREADING OF GOOD-WILL FOR BULGARIA.)

2. A NOTEWORTHY FEATURE OF ATTENDANCE OF THE AMERICAN CONTINGENT, THEY REPORTED, WAS THAT THEY WERE ALMOST "TAKEN OVER" BY THE RUSSIANS, TO THE POINT THAT RUSSIAN AUTHORS ACTUALLY SHOULDERED OUT OF THEIR WAY OTHER PARTICIPANTS WHO IMPEDED THEIR ACCESS TO THE AMERICANS. BULGARIANS WERE NEXT IN DEGREE OF ATTENTIONS TO OUR WRITERS. THE AMERICANS, THEY SAID, WERE "THE STARS" OF THE CONFERENCE. ALL OF THE ABOVE GUESTS ALSO SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WERE INTENSELY BORED BY PREDICTABLE COMMUNIST SPEECHES WHICH LAMBASTED THE WEST IN GENERAL AND THE US IN PARTICULAR. THE ONE AMERICAN PARTICIPANT WHO MIGHT BE PRESUMED TO BE IN SYMPATHY WITH SUCH PROPAGANDA WAS HIMSELF IGNORED BY EVERYBODY.

3. THE CONFERENCE HAS OF COURSE COME OUT WITH A HIGH-SOUNDING COMMUNIQUE ABOUT HELSINKI AND THE DUTY OF WRITERS TO WORK FOR PEACE AND DETENTE (TEXT NOT YET PUBLISHED). THIS WAS TO HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, AND NOBODY PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO IT AT THE CONFERENCE NOR, IN THE OPINION OF THESE PARTICIPANTS, WOULD AUTHORS ELSEWHERE FIND MUCH EITHER TO PRAISE OR TO CRITICIZE IN ITS GENERALLY INNOCUOUS SENTIMENTS. AMERICAN AUTHORS GAVE MANY INTERVIEWS, SOME FOR BROADCAST BY RADIO AND TV LARGELY IN EASTERN COUNTRIES. GORE VIDAL THOUGHT HE MADE A USEFUL POINT WHEN, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH RUSSIAN AUTHOR KONSTANTIN SIMONOV, HE DECLARED THAT AMERICAN

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CAN AUTHORS SHOULD NOT BE CREDITED WITH HAVING MUCH POLITICAL INFLUENCE. THEY ARE A "BAROMETER" OF OUR SOCIETY, HE REPORTEDLY SAID. WHEN THE PRESSURE CHANGES, THEY CHANGE, TOO, AND IT WOULD BE ILL-ADVISED EITHER TO CREDIT THE BAROMETER WITH CHANGING THE WEATHER OR TO "SMASH IT WHEN ONE DOESN'T LIKE THE WEATHER." (TO WHICH THE DURABLE SIMONOV READILY AGREED, PROBABLY INTERPRETING THE REMARK TO MEAN THAT AUTHORS EVERYWHERE HAVE TO ADJUST TO CHANGING POLITICAL CONDITIONS.)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SOFIA 1269

4. BULGARIAN JOURNALIST COVERING CONFERENCE SAID FOREIGN JOURNALISTS PRESENT HAD BEEN ASTOUNED AND FINALLY INFURIATED BY BULGARIAN SPONSORS' PRACTICE OF NOT PERMITTING JOURNALISTS TO SEE TEXTS OF PARTICIPANTS' PRESENTATIONS AND KEEPING CONFERENCE COMPLETELY CLOSED TO JOURNALISTS. LE MONDE CORRESPONDENT RETURNED TO PARIS AFTER FIRST DAY AND FRENCH CULTURAL ATTACHE TOLD EMBOFF JUNE 11 THAT FRENCH MEDIA REPS SAID THEY WOULD BE PLANNING CONFERENCE ON BASIS CONTRADICTION BETWEEN AIM OF CONFERENCE AND FENCE BULGARIANS BUILT AROUND IT.

5. UNINVITED AMERICAN JOURNALIST/WRITER CREATED MINOR STIR BY WIDELY DISTRIBUTING PETITION REGARDING TWO IMPRISONED UKRAINIAN WRITERS. BULGARIAN SPOKESMAN DEFLECTED PRESS QUESTIONING ABOUT TWO AT REGULAR EVENING CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESS BRIEFING BY STATING THAT TWO WERE NOT KNOWN TO ANYONE AT CONFERENCE, INCLUDING SOVIET WRITERS PRESENT.

6. IN GENERAL, THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN NO CLASH OF IDEAS AT THE CONFERENCE, AND NO PUBLIC INTERCHANGES GOING BEYOND BLAND GENERALITIES. THE AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS DID NOT PUBLICLY TAKE ISSUE WITH CONVENTIONAL COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA FROM EASTERN AND SELECTED WESTERN PARTICIPANTS BECAUSE, AS THEY PUT IT, "NOBODY, INCLUDING USUALLY THE PEOPLE PUTTING

IT OUT, COULD HAVE PUT ANY CREDENCE IN IT." AND
BULGARIAN MEDIA HAVE LARGELY TONED DOWN INFLAMMATORY
RHETORIC IN THEIR REPORTING. INCIDENTALLY, THE REMARKS
ATTRIBUTED TO JOHN CHEEVER AS PER REFTEL C MUST HAVE
BEEN EDITED TO SLANT THEM IN THE DIRECTION BULGARIANS
PREFERRED. WE CHECKED THE RECOLLECTION OF C. P. SNOW
WHO WAS CERTAIN THAT CHEEVER SAID SOMETHING VAGUELY
SIMILAR BUT NOT WHAT WAS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM BY RABOT-
NICHESKO DELO.
HERZ

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